

Walter Hopps, the curator, epitomises how we can, as artists and designers, always look at things round the other way, by arriving the other way round. Both return us to the same point in tandem but changed. Our artistic compass is dizzy. Hopps's, whose first curated show was in fact on a merry-go-round, 'discovered' Marcel Duchamp in America, and introduced the infamous Campbell's soup cans of Andy Warhol well in anticipation of Pop Art.

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In its perception of ordinary life, art donates a kind of shock to the aesthetic regime. The range of influences within modernity work upon our sense of self, simply freed of value, to make subjective, new values of negation. Hopps later curated work of artists on the edge of our perception of what is unacceptable or of negative value, the failed, self-taught artist or 'outsider' subject, which inevitably also was to be inclusive of just about anybody thus changing the viewpoint of everything around him that he loved.

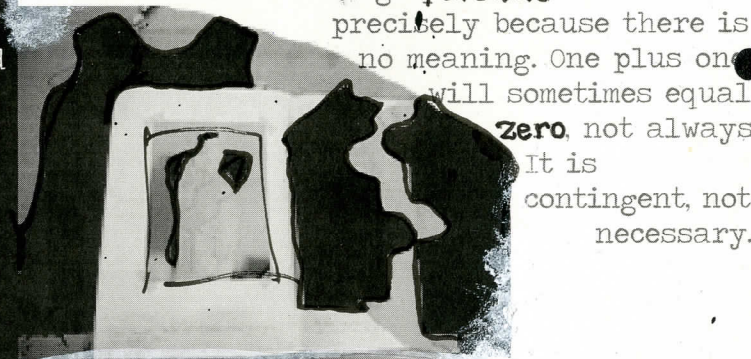
His most celebrated exhibition was the 1963 Marcel Duchamp retrospective, held at the Pasadena Art Museum, in its original home on Los Robles Avenue. Duchamp stands at the crossroads, presenting perpetual ambiguity in objects, since the work resides neither there nor there, in speculative relations to a constantly shifting perspective. Art as we know it has long since had nothing to do with the branded value of the 'ready-made'. The normative value of 'Duchamp' now resides elsewhere, perhaps no longer as art, but as pointing to the 'abnormal' within the norm. Yet capital exploits this 'weakness' as its strength, [watch any American movie about the heroism of the underdog]. Its internal contradiction is the dynamic of self-production of winners and losers. Duchamp capitulates the weak sign into the system and empowers the main stream of capital in which art and design are commodities for neo-liberal ideology.



However, in 1977, in the introduction to his exhibition 'Visions', Hopps wrote, "I was seeing a kind of art evolving out of a way of life, an art totally apart from the mainstream of the modernist art theory and practice, in which so many of us have been schooled. I was seeing the contemporary art not so much immersed in itself as 'art', as one engaged in an on-going dialogue with life, accessible by virtue of its shared humanity, rather than by an academic indoctrination". Hopps was himself also abnormal, and unpredictable, a stranger to himself. He would show up out of the shadows, or disappear at times on his own, self-absorbed, and re-appear again seemingly without cause or reason, and with no explanation. Can Art be its own exception?

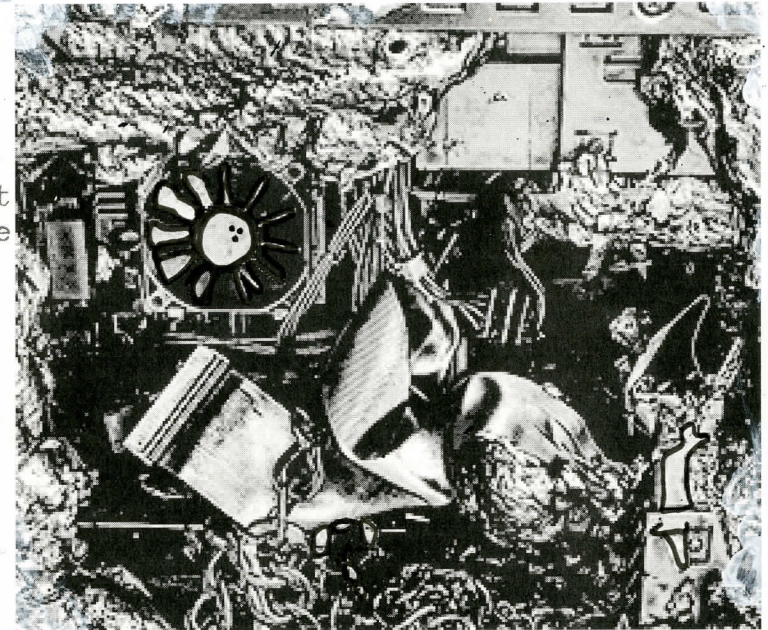
What is the happier state? To be at home and find everything suddenly unfamiliar, or the other way round, when not at home, to find something strangely familiar in a new encounter? Fantasy, once carried into reality, will seriously disappoint expectation, since it is the product of social relations that pre-exist and produce its wishes and abstractions.

Neither perhaps can decidedly 'settle' the account between the wish for a new self, and its coming true. Nothing can be fulfilled except in confronting the obstacle to fulfilment in the certainty of its doubtful success. I believe in nothing, yet, am free. 'Failure' is uncoupled from the moralism of 'success'. Ray Brassier, the philosopher, sets an argument for a truth in a transcendent form of realism as a strange paradox.



The feeling of 'deja-vu' brings with it sensations of disappointment and excitement simultaneously. The pleasure one wishes for in a new experience is complicated by its event having happened, if only to be glimpsed in the lucidity of the fleeting moment, when the virtual past catches up with the actual present. Nietzsche identified the perpetual circularity in life experience the 'eternal return'. What if, he asks, we always return to our lives and have to repeat each experience again? Falling in love obeys this law to some extent. A kind of melancholy arises in desire. It is as if the two had always known each other as one, but were destined as strangers who eventually must part and be two again.

They meet, the other way round, only to begin at the end. Will the lovers not be forced to allegorise and beautify their tragic sense, for enjoyment to ensue?



We can try it out ourselves, for the sake of having some fun with the idea of the reversal. What if a chair's body replaces a mannequin? What happens to the 'couture' in the case of the negative space of the chair, already forming the negative space of a human being? These are antinomies of reason. The chair has a 'life' of its own. It looks back at the human for whom it is a slave form, yet its purpose now exceeds its lifeless negation. Or what if we can cut away everything but the barest structures from a chair, a dress, a painting, or a musical composition, how do we imagine form's new function? What rituals would the reformulation initiate? How does such reformulation change perception? If we cut away a corner of a rectangle, and show it to be separated, what thoughts arise from the act of cutting and separating, if not the meta-phor of the cut itself?

